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ESTABLISHMENT OF A NUCLEAR-WEAPON-FREE ZONE IN THE REGION OF THE MIDDLE EAST

Report of the Secretary-General

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. In paragraph 10 of its resolution 50/66 of 12 December 1995, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to continue to pursue consultations with the States of the region of the Middle East and other concerned States, in accordance with paragraph 7 of resolution 46/30 of 6 December 1991 and taking into account the evolving situation in the region, and to seek from those States their views on the measures outlined in chapters III and IV of the study annexed to his report (A/45/435) or other relevant measures, in order to move towards the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East. In paragraph 11 of the same resolution, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit to it at its fifty-first session a report on the implementation of the resolution.

2. The present report is submitted in response to the request contained in paragraph 11 of the resolution.

II. ACTION TAKEN

3. On 17 January 1996, the Secretary-General addressed a note verbale to the States of the region and other concerned States requesting them to submit their views pursuant to paragraph 10 of the above resolution. Replies were received from Iraq, Israel, Saudi Arabia and the Syrian Arab Republic and are reproduced in the annex to the present report.

4. The Secretary-General has continued to attach particular importance to the issue and has, as in previous years, carried out consultations in various ways with concerned parties within and outside the region to explore ways and means of promoting the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, taking into account in particular the evolving situation in the region.

5. The Secretary-General notes with regret that since his last report the views of the main parties in the region, particularly on the sequence of events which should lead to the establishment of the zone, have not evolved any further. He is also concerned about the apparent impasse in the work of the Working Group on Arms Control and Regional Security, which was established in the framework of the multilateral peace process in the Middle East. In the view of the Secretary-General, the Working Group has played a useful role as a forum for discussing a broad range of arms control, disarmament and confidence-building measures, including the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region.

6. The Secretary-General therefore urges all concerned parties to tackle the issue with renewed determination with a view to achieving tangible progress as expeditiously as possible towards establishing a common position. The resumption of such discussions would serve as a confidence-building measure in itself and would also facilitate the overall peace process. In this connection, the Secretary-General once again emphasizes the readiness of the United Nations to continue to provide any assistance deemed helpful in moving the discussions forward.

Annex

REPLIES RECEIVED FROM GOVERNMENTS

IRAQ

[Original: Arabic]

[13 March 1996]

1. Iraq supports the idea of establishing a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the region of the Middle East, given that the region is one of the most dangerous hotbeds of armed conflict in the world, and it does so in particular because Israel is not a party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, possesses large numbers of nuclear weapons and is developing other weapons of mass destruction and related delivery systems.

2. The functioning of Israel's nuclear programme outside the international non-proliferation regime and Israel's refusal to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and to place its facilities under comprehensive International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards represent defiance of the will of the international community in this domain. This is despite the many calls made upon Israel by the General Assembly in the resolutions it has adopted annually since 1974, the latest of which is its resolution 50/66, by the Security Council in its resolution 487 (1981) and by many other international forums. In paragraph 3 of the resolution on the Middle East adopted by the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the Conference notes with concern the continued existence in the Middle East of unsafeguarded nuclear facilities, and in paragraph 4 it calls upon all States in the region that have not yet done so, without exception, to accede to the Treaty as soon as possible and to place their nuclear facilities under full-scope IAEA safeguards.

3. In paragraph 14 of its resolution 687 (1991), the Security Council notes that the actions taken in implementation of section C of the same resolution represent steps taken towards the goal of establishing in the Middle East a zone free of weapons of mass destruction and all missiles for their delivery and the objective of a global ban on chemical weapons. Although it is now nearly five years since that resolution was adopted, we have seen no serious movement towards the implementation of the provisions of this paragraph by the relevant international agencies, particularly IAEA. The Director General of IAEA was to have continued his visits to the Middle East region in order to acquaint himself with the positions of the parties in the region with regard to the proposed model safeguards and the best ways and means of implementing paragraph 14 of resolution 687 (1991). To the contrary, however, a frenzied race is under way in the region to develop and acquire weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons.

4. The Israeli position, which attempts to separate the issue of ridding the region of nuclear weapons from its international context and tries to link it with the so-called peace process in the region, is one of deception and

sophistry. There can be no stability and no peace while one of the parties retains its nuclear arsenal, because the maintenance of this situation poses a serious threat to the security and stability of the countries of the region in general and is incompatible with any effort to bring peace to the region.

5. Iraq affirms that Israel must, as a matter of urgency, be required to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and to submit its nuclear facilities to the international inspection regime as a fundamental step towards making the Middle East region a zone free of the dangers posed by weapons of mass destruction. We should also like to affirm once more that Iraq's position is part and parcel of the inter-Arab position, which regards the requirement for Israel to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and place its nuclear and other facilities under full-scope IAEA safeguards as a precondition for any serious endeavour to transform the Middle East region into a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction under the auspices of the United Nations.

ISRAEL

[Original: English]

[25 June 1996]

1. Israel has advocated in the past and continues to support the concept of establishing in the Middle East, in due course, a credible and mutual verifiable nuclear-weapon-free zone, freely negotiated by all States of the region.

2. Israel fully subscribes to the statements made by the Secretary-General in his reports, namely that:

> "... a nuclear-weapon-free zone cannot be conceived of or implemented in a political vacuum, separate from the process of mutual reconciliation." (A/48/399, 25 October 1993, para. 22)
>
> "... Confidence must be built on all sides: ... confidence that military solutions to political problems are excluded ... Most important of all, there must be progress in solving the fundamental conflicts in the region. Without such progress, technical measures in the nuclear area or on other security problems will hardly be given serious thought ..." (A/45/435, 10 October 1990, para. 110)
>
> "... A radical transformation, step by step, must be effected in the military and political relationships of the entire area ..." (ibid., para. 151)

3. It is Israel's conviction that the achievement of a "radical transformation in the military and political relationships of the entire area" must be based on peace among all States of the area. The process of the achievement of peace demands the building of confidence, political reconciliation, based on agreements among all States of the area, economic cooperation as well as arms control and disarmament regimes. This is by necessity a step-by-step process.

4. Israel strongly believes that, as far as regional security and arms control is concerned, the establishment of confidence-building measures is an essential first step. Such measures, to be tested over time, will enable all the States of the region to gain the confidence necessary to approach mutually agreed arms control measures with a greater sense of equanimity.

5. All regional arms control measures should be dealt with in the full context of the peace process. Meaningful arms control negotiations, where priority is assigned to weapon systems which experience has proved to be destructive and destabilizing, can follow a proven and durable peace among the States of the region and reconciliation among the peoples of the region.

6. Unfortunately, we have not yet reached this stage. At the present moment, many of the prerequisites for meaningful negotiations on arms control in the Middle East are as yet not in place.

7. Until such time when the necessary requirements are met, it is incumbent upon the parties that currently participate in the Arms Control and Regional Security process to identify and pursue an agenda that can contribute to the attainment of the desired political climate and thus pave the way to productive arms control negotiations.

8. Israel believes that the existing forum of the Middle East Multilateral Working Group on Arms Control and Regional Security, which was established by the Madrid Conference, is the most promising forum to pursue the negotiations between the parties.

9. It is Israel's conviction that nothing should be done to treat any issue in isolation from the comprehensive framework of the peace negotiations. Unfortunately, attempts in the past to do so have blocked the road to peaceful accommodation and might shake the delicate balance achieved through direct negotiations. Therefore, restraint and caution are strongly recommended. The peace negotiations, bilateral as well as multilateral, should therefore be respected and in no way eroded.

SAUDI ARABIA

[Original: Arabic]

[1 April 1996]

1. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has promoted the idea of establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East by taking a number of steps in this regard, most significantly:

By acceding to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons;

By refraining from producing, acquiring, obtaining or possessing nuclear weapons and nuclear explosive devices and from permitting the stationing of nuclear weapons in its territory by any third party;

By openly and firmly supporting the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East through the position it adopted with respect to the extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, and by unreservedly supporting the resolutions of the United Nations on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East;

By participating actively in the multilateral working group on arms control and regional security in promoting mutual confidence and security in the Middle East.

2. Saudi Arabia supports all United Nations efforts for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East. It calls upon all States in the region, particularly those that have not yet acceded to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, to take practical and urgent measures under the relevant General Assembly resolutions to achieve this goal by acceding to the Treaty and placing all of their nuclear activities under International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards.

3. Despite Israel's outward support for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East, as expressed in its support for the relevant General Assembly resolutions, its sophistries come to the fore when it links the question of addressing the issue of nuclear weapons in the region with the peace process, with comprehensive negotiations involving all of the parties, with the functioning of the working group on arms control and regional security and with the pursuit of a gradualist approach to the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East beginning with confidence- and security-building measures. In practice, this means the postponement of consideration of a matter that is of the utmost importance for the region to some undefined time in the future. This is what Israel really wants.

4. Although, in their resolutions on this subject, the United Nations, IAEA and the conferences of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and the Organization of the Islamic Conference have repeatedly urged the States of the region not to develop, produce, test or otherwise acquire nuclear weapons or nuclear explosive devices or to permit their stationing in their territories or territories under their control, Israel still refuses to respond to such appeals. It still refuses to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, and it continues to display a lack of enthusiasm for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East.

5. The Israeli position with respect to the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East is well known and is not new. The proposals made by Israel are tantamount to attempts to justify its position on not acceding to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and its failure to provide any active support for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East. This stems from its policy of deferring consideration of the issue in order to use it to exert pressure on the peace process and to tilt the future balance of power in the region in its favour.

6. The Israeli position of rejecting nuclear disarmament in practice will be maintained as long as Israel's leaders believe that their possession of nuclear weapons is a major factor in deterring and intimidating neighbouring States.

7. Israel's possession of nuclear weapons is incompatible with its declared desire for peace and reflects an Israeli strategy that aims for hegemony over the region.

8. The possession of nuclear weapons by any State in a sensitive region such as the Middle East constitutes a source of concern not only for the peoples of the region but for the world as a whole.

9. Saudi Arabia urges the international community and the Security Council to require Israel to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and to implement the IAEA resolutions urging it to place all of its nuclear facilities under the Agency's full-scope safeguards. Israel must declare that it renounces its nuclear armament and must present a full inventory of its stocks of nuclear weapons and nuclear materials to the Security Council and IAEA. These steps are indispensable for the establishment of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction, and principally nuclear weapons, in the region of the Middle East. This is basic to the establishment of a comprehensive and just peace in the region.

SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC

[Original: Arabic]

[16 April 1996]

The Syrian Arab Republic affirms its commitment to the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East. It expresses its deep concern at Israel's insistence on being alone in the region in having a military nuclear programme that is outside the international non-proliferation regime. It is of the view that the continued operation of this programme and Israel's refusal to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and to place its nuclear facilities under full-scope safeguards cause a dangerous imbalance, constitute a threat to regional security, detract from the credibility and universality of the Treaty and prevent the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East.